[Barre's El Club Espanol]

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BARRE'S EL CLUB ESPANOL

The Spanish Club rooms breathe Old Spain. They flaunt Loyalism

From the far wall letters in shrieking red prophesy, Morira El [Fascimmo?]! - [Fascimmo?] will die! Beneath the words a crude, hand-knitted figure extends right arm heavenward, the other to the ground. It is encased in glass, and maple framed. Beside it a padlocked contribution box makes the plea, [Salvence?] el nino espanol. Flaming Loyalist posters hide the east wall. Ayuda Al [Pueblo?] [Kepapol?]! Ayuda a Espana! [?] [Roja?] Espanol! A long, handwritten list of Barre subscribers hangs from the Spanish Red Cross Certificate.

[FL?] Club overlooks North Main Street, just above Barre's 'deadline.' The furnishings are simple, practical. Smooth-worn benches line the walls. Sturdy card tables are scattered the length and width of the main room. Two are marble-topped tables with metal bases fastened to the bare, hardwood floor, - relica, perhaps, of some once fashionable Barre club. Red-and-yellow streamers brighten the ceiling. Their crispness has been lost to the moist hotness of June days. Now the colors rustle their patriotism limply.

John Bavine, born Juan Bavine some sixty-five years ago in Santander, Spain, is El Club's efficient secretary. If ever his was the heritage of Spain, - raven hair, olive C. [3?] [?]

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skin, flashing eyes, - time and sorrow have claimed them, have faded the thick hair to gray-white, burned the eyes to a dull ash. There is kindness in those eyes, and understanding; and when he speaks of his wife and three children “trapped' as he says in “Franco's Spain', suffering and helplessness [veil?] them. Manuel Teral, his young Barre-born companion, is more truly a son of Spain in feature and action. Coal black hair, dark eyes, finely chiseled nose with spirited flares at the nostrils, impetuous, bold in speech and ideas. A little of the braggadocio in him, but nevertheless - a young Spain loyal to Old Spain. For six years Manuel has been secretary of the Barre branch of the Stonecutters' Union.

Joe Luiz, a third companion, sits at a table nearby, silent and thoughtful. His English is better than [Bavine's?], yet he makes no move to help his friend when he falters and gropes for a work. It is Manuel who picks up the sentence, twists it into a bolder expression of his own.

“This Club was start' back in 1926,” [Bavine?] said. “There were few Spanish here before 1900. It is funny, they start to come over fast after the Spanish-American War. It is funny, too, that ninety percent in Barre, an' in all of Vermont, come from one provence in Spain called Santander. It is a place with as many people as Vermont. There is granite in that province, hard an' soft, but I cannot say that most of those who came to Barre had already learned the trade over there. No, I say maybe a half of 3 them. Myself, I was a farmer, an' my father, too. I learn the stonecutting here. Yes, I still work in the sheds. For fifteen years I work in the Bonazzi sheds in Montpelier, now I work here in Barre. In Santander the sheds are built in the open, like in Italy. They do not use much machinery, everything is hand work, so with the fresh air an' all there is little danger for the lungs. The pay is pretty good, better than other skilled work like carpentering or plumbing. Most of the Spanish in Barre are in the granite business. Louis Aja, who lives in Montpelier, was the first Spanish baby born in Barre. That was only forty-two years ago. [At?] South [End?] there are ten

Spanish owned sheds, an' at the North End almost as many. Spanish non-union men? No, I do not know of any here —"

Young Manuel's eyes flashed angrily. “Spanish non-union men! I should say not! It is the French, damn them, that are non-union. Of the some 150 non-union men in the Barre district, most of them are French. I know. I ought to know. A bunch of squawkers and suckers. I know. They've come up to me and pulled their sob story. 'Look,' they complain, 'my work is as good as So-and-So's. He gets his [$?]8.50 a day, I get only [$?]5.00. I'm worth as much as he is. I put in just as much time. You've got to help me. [What?] can I do about it?"' Manuel's dark forehead creased into a frown. “Whiners!” he spat. “I should tell them to go some shed boss behind the Union's back and beg your miserable 4 $5.00 or $6.00 a day. You've got no right to belly-ache now. Get out.” Manual shrugged helplessly. “I should tell them that. But the Union has rules. I have to stick to them. O. K., I tell them, you've been working for $5.00 a day for a year, huh? O. K. then, pay up the Union dues for that period and you'll get your Union wages."

Bavine spoke in his halting English. “Some of those French, they are good Union-men. I know a few of them, fine fellows—"

Luiz, the silent one, nodded agreeably.

“Fine fellows!” Manuel [mimicked?]. His full, red lips curled scornfully. “Those French spoiled everything for us back in '22. We'd have a lot more today if it hadn't been for those strike-breaking rats. Farmers, bakers, anyone who had hands to work with. Some of 'em had never seen granite, I bet -"

“Maybe we should have stop' them[,?]" Bavine suggested mildly. He sat very still. The muscles of his seamed face were quiet. Only his calloused palms rubbed together restlessly. “You were pretty young then, Manuel,” he reminded.

“Not too young, Bavine. Not too young. Don't forget I've been stonecutting for sixteen years. You know what we should have done? We should have massed together, all of us, down at the Montpelier railroad station, and the Barre station. We should have met them at the train. Warned them to keep out. We'd have kept them out. It wouldn't have come to a good fight. They're too yellow 5 for that. But the Union wasn't so strong then, it wasn't what it is today. Today it would be easy.”

“[Eh?], well Manuel, that is over, no?” Bavine hinted. “Our friend here would like to hear about our Club. I will tell you: most of the Barre Spaniards are members. Every night they are welcome here. In the winter sometimes forty or fifty gather here at night. That is when they have the good time. We talk about the sheds, an' politics, about everything, an' if they get what you say 'too hot under the collar,' they go in that little room over there. They shut the door. There they con yell all they want without disturb' the card players out here. Oh, they play all kind of games: briscola, trisette, tutti, mus. But it is our rule that never they should play for money. They play for wine or a beer. That we sell with no profit to the Club, they pay just what we pay. Twice a month we have ladies' nights. When the hall is theirs, and us men we keep out.

“We Spanish are good Loyalists, - so you see by the walls —.” Bavine indicated the vivid posters. “Our Club has done good work for the victims of [Fascism?]. In France there are 500,000 refuges in concentration camps. That war in Spain, it started in July of 1936. It did not take us in America ling to lend a hand.” Bavine took a Club ledger form the shelf. “See,” [we?] ran a stubby, calloused finger down a page filled with fine writing. It was in Spanish, neat, the letters much like printing. “See, here 6 is the record. It say we start' to take in contributions in August. That is fast work, no? Since then, up to date, we have taken in $15,000. Just here in Barre. Oh, there are many ways we raise money. Festivals, dances, picnics. Now we even have little stamps, like the double cross ones you see at Christmas. Here they are..” They were about an inch square. On them were printed - [Sociedades?] Hispanas Confoderadas. [yuda?] a [lspana?].

“We have them form .25 to $5.00,” Bavine explained. “The members have little books, like bank books, an' when they buy a stamp they stick it in the book. In the United States today there are 176 Clubs like this one that raise money for our suffering countrymen. It is what you call a big confraternity, these Clubs. We have had a congress in Philadelphia, in Pittsburg, an' in other large cities. The money we send to the Spanish Confederated Society in New York, and to the Medical [Burcau?] - to save Spanish Democracy. [Harold?] Ickes, he is chairman of that committee.”

Manuel spoke. “You've heard about that ship that arrived in Vera Cruz, Mexico, two weeks ago? With 1,900 refugees aboard. Well, it was money from our Spanish-American Clubs that got them here -"

Bavine was pursuing his own thoughts. “I do not understand it,” he said half to himself. “The Spain I know years ago was a quiet country, she love' peace. Nor farmers work' the rich fields. Nor artists were proud to make beautiful our big cities an' cathedrals. We were 22,000,000 people 7 who want' only to be left alone, - an' now what. You see the beautiful cathedrals all smash' an' buried, the cities in ruin. A friend of mine, he say the other day that one Spaniard he is killed every nine minutes. Every nine minutes. God, that is terrible. More than one million of them are lay dead from this war-"

“France!” Manuel scoffed. “General France. Putty in Mussolini's hand, that's what he is. And what is that damn Mussolini. His own countrymen hate him and his Fascism. Most every one of our older Barre Italians hate him. Only the young ones speak well of him. Why? Because they know no better. Because he is a grabber and a go-getter, they,re proud to be of his blood. He's a conqueror, and it's gone to their heads. Well, I'm Barre born, but no France goes to my head -"

“I have a wife an' three children in Spain,” Bavine said. He spoke the words as if they were a sorrow long withdrawn in himself. “My wife, she took the children there just before the war to see their grandmother. They stay' too long. After the war is start' they are not

allow' to come home. It is my mistake, a foolish mistake. Always it has been in my heart to become the American citizen. Always I say, tomorrow I will take out the papers. But always there is something else to do, an' so I wait. But now I have them, I will send for the family. Me? No, I will not go over for them, I fell safer here. It makes 8 me sick an' afraid to have them over there. Letters? Yes, my wife she writes, an' I write to her, but what good is that? The letters, they have been open'. She cannot say what is in her heart, she cannot tell the truth about what is go' on. An' my letters to her, they are open', too. I do not even dare tell her about all the money we have collect' for the unfortunate Spanish, or all the good we are do'."

As Bavine spoke Manuel stepped across the room and took from the wall a photograph of a group of young men. Perhaps a dozen. He pointed out two in the front row. "These are two of our Barre Loyalists who went over to fight for a just cause. This older one was born in Spain but he'd lived here for a good ten years. He was wounded, he got away, he told us what was going on in Spain. He said if they hear that you belong to a bakers' union or a tailors' union, your life is not safe overnight. This younger fellow was born here in Barre. He was in Spain. He and his family. He was killed. What does my friend do? He's never seen Spain, but he packs up right away, and goes over to fight. He didn't come back. He was killed. We're going to have a good picture of him, of him alone. We'll put it there between those windows, eh Bavine?" he asked eagerly.

Bavine smiled tolerantly. "Me, I don't care. Wherever you want." He hunched himself in his chair. "Father Leocadio 9 Lobo is doing good work for our cause. He is a very intelligent priest, an' good. He came to America to find help for the Spanish people. For twenty-five years he said Mass every day in a cathedral in Madrid. He was well liked by the People-"Bavine paused.

Manuel continued sealously, "He's been making tours all over the United States in behalf of the refugees. He came here to Barre April twenty-fourth, and spoke in Scanpini Hall. The place was packed. Ex-mayor Gordon was one of the committee to get him here, he

got in trouble for it. Father Lobo had spoken to the Spanish in Chicago a couple of days before, his next stop was Boston. He was good!" Manuel's eye's shone. "He stood up there in his Roman collar. Sure, I'm a Catholic, he'd say. Catholic like Franco and his followers. But this killing is not necessary. It is against the command of the church-"

Luiz, the silent one, nodded.

Manuel continued. "It was a dirty trick. The priests here in Barre absolutely ignored him. They made no gesture to receive him. It won't stand so good with some of the Barre Spanish. They're Catholics even if they don't go to church every Sunday. Spain is a Catholic country. Before this war the Spanish government was contributing $125,000 a year to the Church. Naturally the Church officials and most priests sided with Franco. It was to the advantage of the Church. Father Lobo sees it as we do. That the Church can take care of herself through voluntary church contributions, 10 each one give as he can. Father Lobo was a great inspiration to our Club members. Since he came here the stamps have doubled their sales."

Bavine agreed. "Yes, that is true. I know, because I sell them."

"We had an Ambulance Drive a while back," Manuel said. "Made $656.00 in one night. Last week we had a Spanish Fiesta in the Armory Hall. We took up no collections, only straight admission fees. [Eighty?] cents and fifty-five cents. A professional from New York came to dance for us. Marquita Flores. A small girl, no more than four feet eleven, but could she dance! She's touring the country, too, for the victims of Fascism. She gets no pay. Her heart is with the Loyalists. All we did was pay her fare to Barre, and her living expenses while she stayed here. There was a crowd there that night. And not only Spanish people. How much did we make, Bavine?"

“I cannot say for sure,” the older man said. “All the expenses, they have not yet been figure'. But I guess there will be a $250.00 more for our poor Spanish—"